ISSUE BRIEF: Information, Communication, & Technology

DOMAIN OVERVIEW: The **Information, Communication, & Technology** domain focuses on the programs and policies that ensure people with disabilities and seniors have access to accurate, unbiased, and useful information and that this information is available through a variety of communications systems and strategies. Relevant programs and policies may include, but are not limited to: new technology training, affordable internet service, accessible information formatting, support for informal communication sharing, and culturally appropriate outreach.

SUMMARY: With its proximity to Silicon Valley and the tremendous influx of technology companies in the last 15 years, San Francisco is often at the forefront of innovative technologies and communications efforts. However, with great innovation also come unique challenges, including a growing "digital divide" among seniors and people with disabilities, particularly among middle to low income residents. As information is increasingly moving online, those who cannot afford internet service or don't have access to the tools or training are at risk of being left behind. While the city has developed some technology-related supports and assets specifically for older adults and persons with disabilities, such as the centralized information and referral centers, many residents remain unaware of the many programs and opportunities available to them, highlighting the need for population-specific communication strategies and targeted outreach regarding existing services. This issue brief includes preliminary recommendations to address these gaps.

ISSUE BRIEF SECTIONS:

The Age and Disability Friendly Task Force is charged with identifying achievable and tangible policy and program goals that will increase the accessibility and inclusivity of San Francisco. Members are expected to review the issue brief and draft recommendations. Please come to the meeting prepared to suggest edits, feedback, and recommendations on the topic of **Information, Communication, & Technology.** Ideal recommendations are those that address key populations for this effort: people with disabilities, seniors, caregivers, and people with cognitive impairment.

I.   AGE & DISABILITY FRIENDLY GOALS

Based on the World Health Organization's recommendations, research, relevant reports, and focus groups, below are
goals that we believe contribute to an age- and disability-friendly San Francisco, specifically with regards to **Information, Communication, & Technology.**

When reviewing the following goals, please consider:

- From your experience & expertise, how does San Francisco measure up in the category?
- What are SF's strengths within this area? Where do we have gaps within this area?
- Are these the right goals? What is missing?

GOALS	DESCRIPTION

Seniors and AWD received accurate & useful information when needed, which supports community engagement, access of services & opportunities to meet their needs.	Seniors, people with disabilities, and caregivers are **able to access useful, unbiased, and accurate information** from a variety of trusted sources.
	• **Information is framed appropriately**, incorporating accessible design and formatting, multiple languages, and cultural considerations.
	• **Information is widely available** and provided through a variety of avenues, including:
	    o Informal and formal communication methods; and
	    o Large-scale outreach & campaign efforts.
	• **Information is useful** and updated regularly to ensure accuracy.

Information & data is available through open data sources & is used in planning & advocacy efforts.	Policies and efforts exist **to support the availability and access of public data,** taking into account the following considerations: • Public agencies and organizations prioritize technology supported data collection wherever possible; and • Data collection and data sharing practices aim to increase service utilization.

GOALS	DESCRIPTION
Technology is accessible & inclusive.	All **city-wide communications strategies take into consideration seniors and adults with disabilities**, such as offering appropriate accommodations and multiple ways to participate. **Efforts are made to ensure that existing and new technologies are available** to people with disabilities and seniors, including the following: • Specific tools such as telephones, tablets, computers, and other devices are available and affordable; • Affordable technology support and repair options; • Affordable internet access; • Supportive and effective training.
Participants are empowered to identify & avoid fraud.	Programs and policies are in place **to educate and empower seniors and adults with disabilities to identify and avoid potentially harmful scams** and fraud.

II.	DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS.

Below are some possible recommendations to support the age- and disability-friendliness of San Francisco, specifically with regards to **Information, Communication, & Technology**. These recommendations were informed by the Tech Council, focus groups, the DAAS Needs Assessment, and gaps identified by partner organizations.

These are only meant as a starting point and the role of the task force is to develop the final recommendations, either based on these draft ideas or to address gaps not currently covered here.

GOALS	RECOMMENDATIONS
Improve the availability of information through a variety of means.	**Increase information sharing and outreach, specifically focusing on existing services that are available for residents and their family members**. Examples may include: • Assessing and improving the opportunities and coordination among San Francisco's various information hubs, such as: DAAS Intake, United Way's 211, the City's 311, SF Resource Connect[1], and others; • Establish best practices and coordination of communication with key partner agencies as a way of increasing information sharing; and • Ensure that public and private information venues understand and implement accessibility best practices. Efforts are made **to ensure that City websites and other public information communication avenues are accessible and easy to use**. Some actions may include: • Assessing, identifying, and supporting public agency websites that could be greatly improved with regards to accessibility; and • Coordinating, compiling and sharing accessibility best practices widely.
Ensure that Information & data is available through open data sources & is available for planning & advocacy efforts.	

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[1] http://sfresourceconnect.org/

GOALS	RECOMMENDATIONS
Prioritize programs & policies that allow for accessible & inclusive technology.	**Identify and increase opportunities that increase access to, and support for, frequent use of technology**, including: • Affordable internet connectivity, citywide; • Providing accessible and affordable devices; and • Considering alternative models or approaches for introducing and building trust with new technologies. **Identify and prioritize areas where communication-based technology** (computers, cell phones, etc.) **may improve the quality of life for seniors and people with disabilities**, including the following possible areas: • First responders and medical care; • Accessing transportation; • Frequently used government sites; • Banking, bill paying and financial management; and • Searching for employment or community engagement opportunities. **Increase digital literacy** for seniors & people with disabilities, including: • Offering abundant training programs that are culturally specific and tailored to participant needs; • Assessing the possibility of developing training and support for homebound seniors and adults with disabilities; and • Ensuring that ongoing support is available, such as intermediary level courses or technical support.
Increase efforts that empower seniors & adults with disabilities to identify and avoid fraud.	

III.   SAN FRANCISCO ASSETS

Below are assets within the areas of **Information, Communication, & Technology**, which we believe supports the age- and disability-friendliness of San Francisco. This is not an exhaustive list and we welcome suggestions from task force members to be included in final report.

ASSETS	EXAMPLES
Information or resource centers are available that specifically serve seniors, adults with disabilities, & caregivers.	• **SF DAAS Integrated Intake & Referral Unit:** A "single door" strategy that streamlines access and connection to services, such as home-delivered meals and In-Home Supportive Services. Service is provided in multiple languages. o **DAAS Benefits and Resource Hub:** A one-stop information and resource center specifically for seniors, adults with disabilities, and caregivers. This site is fully accessible, houses a variety of services, and is located in a transit-rich location to best accommodate visitors. • **Aging and Disability Resource Centers:** 12 hubs located throughout the city that provide a one-stop shop for information and assistance for people with disabilities and seniors.
Attempts are being made to address the digital divide.	There are **efforts that provide affordable internet access or equipment,** including**:** • **Efforts to increase access to the internet**, including a Comcast supported discount service plan for seniors and advocacy efforts for municipal broadband. • **SF Virtual Warehouse:** City used equipment (such as desktops) are available for free to nonprofits and schools, **HERE.** Organizations **exist that offer training and support for seniors and adults with disabilities,** including**:** • **SF Public Library:** Offers a range of programming, public computer labs, and hosts an annual Digital Inclusion week; and • **SF Connected:** SF Connected community partners provide free computer training in multiple languages to more than 1,000 seniors and adults with disabilities in 55 senior and community centers.

ASSETS	EXAMPLES
Efforts or polices exist to ensure inclusive & equal access to technology.	**Organizations and efforts exist that focus on improving digital literacy and increased access to communications,** including technology. Some examples include: • **Community Technology Network**: Offers a variety of programs and services, including a focus on increasing digital literacy through the training and placement of volunteers. • **The Tech Council:** a multidisciplinary body that aims to improve technology access for seniors and people with disabilities. • **Tech-enhanced Life:** engages seniors to "test out" equipment as "longevity explorers", more **HERE.** **Additionally, there are federal laws and regulations that seek to ensure access,** including**:** • **Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973:** requires access to programs and activities when electronic and information technology is developed, procured, maintained, or used by agencies receiving federal funds[2]. • **Americans with Disabilities Act:** specifically Title I, Equal Access to Employment; Title II, Equal Access to State & Local Government; and Title III: Equal Access to Public Accommodation.

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[2] https://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/communications-and-it/about-the-section-508-standards

IV.   SAN FRANCISCO GAPS

Below are identified gaps within the area of **Information, Communication, & Technology.** This is not an exhaustive live and we welcome suggestions from the task force members to be included in the final report.

GAPS	EXAMPLES
Information about available resources & how to apply for services is not adequately reaching residents.	Many focus group participants indicated that **they were not familiar with the available resources, opportunities, and programs**, which may be attributed to: • Recognition that there are cultural differences or preferences in how communities receive and share information; • Public and government websites are not engaging, accessible, or easy to navigate; and • Insufficient communication and outreach strategies.
Challenges capturing accurate representation & demographic data for people with disabilities.	There are a number of c**hallenges when relying on surveys to capture information regarding people with disabilities,** including: • Definitions of disability categories inconsistent or excluded; • Accessibility of surveys vary; • When addressing disability, surveys often don't differentiate between issues of seniors versus the issues of people with disabilities; and • May not account for infrastructural difficulties. ○ For example, Pew survey indicates underutilization of ride-sharing apps by people with disabilities. However, people cannot use a system that they cannot access physically and electronically[3].
Technology is rapidly changing, which can be a constant challenge to keep up with.	Recognizing that **technology is a rapidly changing field**, which can generate additional challenges: • Equipment and software becomes outdated quickly; • Significant training and technical support is required to keep pace; and • The need to prioritize and identify which equipment or services.

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[3] Bohn, "Technology and People with Disabilities: Resources, Rewards, and Realities in San Francisco."

There is an increasing "digital divide" between those who have access to communication technology & those who don't.	As resources and information becomes **increasingly digitalized**, **people without access to internet or internet based technologies are increasingly left behind**. This **"digital divide" specifically impacts low income San Franciscans, which includes many seniors and adults with disabilities**. Some specific gaps include: • Providing training or support for homebound seniors and people with disabilities; • Many residents still lack affordable and citywide internet; and • The availability of affordable, accessible devices. **People with disabilities are adopting technology at much lower rates** than people without disabilities. • For example, 67% of people with disabilities say they have a laptop or desktop computer compared with 84% of people without a disability owning a laptop or desktop computer[4].

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[4] Bohn, "Technology and People with Disabilities: Resources, Rewards, and Realities in San Francisco."

APPENDIX A. OTHER AGE & DISABILITY FRIENDLY EFFORTS

A. BEST PRACTICES.

Information.

Seattle, Washington: AAA for Seattle and King County, "Gold Card for Healthy Aging" is an online based information and referral system that includes: resources, assistance, discounts on goods/services, and registration for nutrition programs.

See more here: http://www.seattle.gov/humanservices/services-and-programs/mayors-office-for-senior-citizens

Technology Training.

Connect Chicago's "DigiSeniors" program: facilitated by Microsoft Chicago, offers computer training curriculum geared towards seniors including a "train-the-trainer" sessions.

See more here: https://sway.com/mcWANCqngHTrk6IC

NYC, Older Adults Technology Services (OATS): manages 24 technology labs across New York City and offers a range of computer training and classes geared specifically for seniors.

See more here: http://oats.org/

Policy & Funding.

National Telecommunications & Information Administration (NTIA): the federal agency responsible for advising the President on telecommunications and information policy issues. Programs and policies focus largely on expanding internet access, expanding the spectrum of users, and increasing the economic impact. Additionally, they administer grant programs that "further the deployment and use of broadband and other technologies in America, laying the groundwork for sustainable economic growth; improved education, public safety, and health care; and the advancement of other national priorities."

See more here: https://www.ntia.doc.gov/home

B. EXAMPLES OF OTHER CITY'S AGE & DISABILITY FRIENDLY PLANS:

Table 1: Washington, DC. Age Friendly DC: Strategic Plan (2014-2017)[5]

Domain 7. Communication and Information: Promotion of and access to use of technology to keep older residents connected to their community and friends and family, both near and far.	
GOAL	**RECOMMENDATIONS**
Improve delivery of timely and accessible information important to residents age 50+ and caregivers.	• Overhaul and promote *211 Answers, Please!* database to ensure up-to-date records, a user-friendly interface, easy key-word searches and filterable reports. • Develop a *211 Answers, Please!* Mobile app. • Protect DC resident privacy by implementing a direct mail encryption program for all client communication. • Produce a report that identifies the preferred methods of communication for all residents age 50+, differentiated by age, use of technology, and isolation level. • Develop guidance for People First Language, Language Access compliance, and age-friendly communication practices.
Expand use of technology by older residents.	• Increase access to technology at home for low-income residents age 50+ who are disabled and/or isolated (e.g., computers, tablets, smart phones). • Partner with high schools and youth organizations to establish intergenerational 'knowledge exchanges' where residents age 50+ are trained on new technology skills and offer career and life guidance to youth (e.g., Mentor Up).

Table 2: Portland, Oregon. Action Plan for an Age-Friendly Portland (2013)[6]

Action Area 8: Communication & Information.	
Goal	**Action Items**
Maintain clearinghouses for aging-related information.	• Maintain and promote the 24-hour hotline and the Aging and Disability Resource Connection website. • Maintain and promote the 211 info phone number, text option, and website.
Improve online resources and create standards for age-friendly media.	• Distribute a list of best practices and standards for online communication. • Ensure that all City websites follow best practices and standards for online communication.

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[5] https://agefriendly.dc.gov/publication/age-friendly-dc-strategic-plan-2014-2017
[6] https://www.pdx.edu/ioa/sites/www.pdx.edu.ioa/files/Age-Friendly%20Portland%20Action%20Plan%2010-8-13_0.pdf

Improve the dissemination of information through existing organizations.	• Promote faith based organizations, neighborhood associations, and seniors centers as places where information exchanges can and should be concentrated. • Provide educational opportunities to improve the skills of older adults and service providers on procedures for communicating through print, electronic, and social media.
Launch in Age-Friendly educational campaign.	• Launch an educational campaign that: highlights the fact that our city is aging in an unprecedented fashion; creates an understanding that aging is an issue that affects everyone; provides examples of what "age friendly is; and highlights opportunities for community support and action.

Table 3: City of West Hollywood. Aging in Place, Aging in Community: Five Year Strategic Plan 2016-2020[7]

Domain 5: Communications & Information	
Priority	**Goals**
Culture of receiving help.	• Launch a "We Can Help" media and education campaign to encourage people to ask for and receive help, recognizing the need for respect and confidentiality. • Develop one-on-one support systems that introduce the concept of asking for help in a positive and proactive way. Develop a system to identify needs of those who are socially isolated (in person, remotely, intergenerational, through social circles, faith-based groups, Neighborhood Watch, the Villages, etc.) • Promote proactive planning for wellness in relation to medical, financial, and support systems that are sensitive to the unique attributes of West Hollywood affinity groups (LGBT, Russian-speaking, single adult).
Printed resource information.	• Provide and maintain clearly identified, easily accessible, large-font, comprehensive resource guides in multiple languages and a volunteer reader program. • Offer specialized resource guides for caregivers and family members, addressing general challenges of aging, resilience of older adults, available services, options for accessing benefits for same-sex partners; include transgender sensitive materials. • Distribute written resources throughout the community (hospitals, social service agencies, faith-based organizations) as a part of the "We Can Help" campaign.
Digital Resource Information.	• Support community members who may not have access to electronic technology or who are not comfortably digitally literate by providing computers at Plummer Park and the West Hollywood Public Library. Develop community-based and vetted in-home assistance via electronic technology capacities. • Provide digital GIS based resource guides for clients, caregivers, family members, and social service providers with culturally inclusive information.

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[7] http://www.weho.org/residents/aging-in-place

	• Use digital tools to improve the ability of people with hearing impairment to access information. • Build a group of social media savvy older adults to be peer mentors.

Table 4: New York City, New York. Age Friendly NYC (2009)[8]

Information & Planning.	
Issue	**Initiative**
Older adults want to pursue their interests and interact socially while staying active and busy.	• Publicize citywide opportunities for older New Yorkers through new older adult-focused NYC & Co. website.
Older adults desire a "one-stop shop" for information about City services.	• Redesign DFTA's website to be more user-friendly and provide greater information about services.
Older adults desire to be included in all levels of decision-making about their communities' needs.	• Conduct local community assessments of neighborhoods to determine age friendliness.
Some older adults who are LGBT do not feel welcome in trying to access City services.	• Conduct cultural competency trainings on LGBT issues with the City's senior services providers.

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[8] http://www.nyc.gov/html/dfta/downloads/pdf/age_friendly/agefriendlynyc.pdf

APPENDIX B. RELATED RESEARCH & REFERENCES

Seniors are the fastest growing demographic on social media[9]. Partly because the younger generations are saturated (with regards to technology adoption), but also the increase is reflected in the everyday aging of people turning 65 years old; many are coming into older age with a lot of technological sophistication.

Information is readily available through a variety of means.

- While all age demographics are increasing in their use of internet, specifically in accessing information, seniors and adults with disabilities are much less likely to have access to computers and broadband technology. According to a survey by the Pew Research Center, only 56% of seniors age 65 and older use the internet or email, with that rate dipping significantly as they age. Low-income seniors have an even lower rate of access, at about 39%[10]. (cite, DAAS Needs Ass pg. 5)
- Most people access information through friends and family, as identified by focus group participants and consistent with a 2008 phone survey of San Francisco seniors and adults with disabilities[11].

Technology is accessible and inclusive.

- **Ensuring that Smart City Initiatives Address the Digital Divide:** Smart city initiatives worldwide currently risk increasing a digital divide that leaves behind many of the world's 1 billion persons with disabilities. Cities are making enormous technology investments and yet do little to consider the accessibility of the technology they are purchasing and how smart city programs can impact the lives of persons with disabilities. Findings from a survey of global experts and a series of expert roundtable discussions organized in leading global smart cities demonstrate that while both smart cities initiatives and digital inclusion efforts are advancing, most often these efforts remain largely unconnected. http://g3ict.org/resource_center/newsletter/news/p/newsletterId_/id_568

- "60% of (seniors?) have cellphones and 30% have smart phones" – at MTC focus group

- Public Libraries are a trusted and valuable partner in addressing the digital divide[12].

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[9] http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=247220424

[10] San Francisco Human Services Agency Planning Unit, "Assessment of the Needs of San Francisco Seniors and Adults with Disabilities. Part 2: Analysis of Needs and Services, pg. 5.

[11] San Francisco Human Services Agency Planning Unit, "Assessment of the Needs of San Francisco Seniors and Adults with Disabilities. Part 2: Analysis of Needs and Services, pg. 6.

- **Hearing Health:** "develop standards that ensure that hearing aids and OTC wearable hearing devices are compatible and interoperable with other technologies and communication systems."
    - Develop and disseminate criteria that individuals and families can use to evaluate and compare hearing-related products and services. (see also Tech-enhanced Life)Increase public awareness and consumer friendly info on the availability, connectivity, and use of hearing aids and hearing assistive technologies;
    - Develop and implement standards for an open platform approach for hearing aid programming that allows any hearing health care professional to program the device settings and require point of sale info about the programming features and programming portability of hearing aids in order to enable more informed purchasing decisions."[13]

Participants are empowered to identify and avoid fraud.

The United States Senate Special Committee on Aging has identified fraud as their primary focus for 2017, and released a report based on the 10 most common frauds as reported to their "Fraud Hotline"[14]. A few interesting findings include:

- The hotline received more than double the amount of consumer calls in 2016, than received in 2015;
- The number one most common complaint (and more than twice as common as other scams) involves seniors who receive calls from fraudsters posing as Internal Revenue Service (IRS) employees;
- As the "largest, most pervasive impersonation scam in the history of the IRS", at least 1.87 million Americans were targeted, with an average of 150-200 victims a week.

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[12] International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions and Electronic Information for Libraries, "Principles on Public Access in Libraries."
[13] Committee on Accessible and Affordable Hearing Health Care for Adults et al., Hearing Health Care for Adults.
[14] Collins and Casey Jr., "Fighting Fraud: Senate Aging Committee Identifies Top 10 Scams Targeting Our Nation's Seniors."